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EXAMINER

SHAFFER, ERIC T

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3623

DATE MAILED: 11/17/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/705,486

Applicant(s)

GENDLER, JOSEPH

Examiner

Eric Shaffer

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 August 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-67 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-67 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. In view of the appeal brief filed on August 24, 2004, PROSECUTION IS HEREBY REOPENED. The action is set forth below.

To avoid abandonment of the application, appellant must exercise one of the following two options:

(1) file a reply under 37 CFR 1.111 (if this Office action is non-final) or a reply under 37 CFR 1.113 (if this Office action is final); or,

(2) request reinstatement of the appeal.

If reinstatement of the appeal is requested, such request must be accompanied by a supplemental appeal brief, but no new amendments, affidavits (37 CFR 1.130, 1.131 or 1.132) or other evidence are permitted. See 37 CFR 1.193(b)(2).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1 – 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19 – 21, 25 – 29, 35 – 42, 47, 48, 50, 53 – 56 and 60 - 64 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al (US 5,125,075).

4. As per claims 1 and 17, Goodale et al teach a method and a system for automating, the method comprising the steps of:

generating at least one electronic document, (“the send operation enables the user to transmit items to other users in the form of a memo, phone message, invitation or package”, column 5, lines 21 - 23) and (“means for enabling a sender to establish a circulation list and associate the item to be circulated with the circulation list”, column 1, line 68 – column 2, line 2), wherein a memo, a phone message invitation, package and a circulation list are electronic documents and establishing a list is generating a list;

identifying entities in the approval process, (“the present invention provides electronic means for a user to ask a pertinent chain of command for approval and comments of a certain request”, column 4, lines 33 - 35) and (“the route list therefore specifies an ordered list of originator selected recipients”, column 4, lines 42 - 44), and (“a purchase order request from a project engineer may have to be approved through a pertinent chain of command”, column 1, lines 13 - 15), wherein recipients are entities;

automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval process, (“the present invention enables users to process a document or the like through desired recipients as opposed to merely distribute documents or copies thereof to desired recipients”, column 4, lines 29 - 32) and (“after a recipient has received the route package and taken action, i.e. voted and/or commented on the request, he sends the route package to the next list recipient via e-mail”, column 4, lines 46 - 49), wherein e-mail is an automatic process (“automated features are conventionally called applications and include for example electronic mail”, column 4, lines 18 -

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19), wherein automatically is defined in the applicant specification as providing automation to a manual process.

Goodale does not teach a system specifically for project management. A general reason why it would be useful to apply the Goodale invention to a project management is that projects have numerous points in the time span of the project where approvals are needed.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the Goodale invention to project management because projects have many phases where approvals are necessary. These approvals are also made by different entities based on the phase that the project is in and by how much money is being requested as needed for a specific phase. Each step in a project could be thought of as a separate purchase order, so the Goodale system that approves purchase orders would be very useful to perform these types of approvals faster and more efficiently than a manual process.

As per claims 2 and 37, Goodale teaches the method comprising the step of automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval process (“interrupt circulation of the request by returning the request to the originator for second consideration”, column 4, lines 57 – 59). While Goodale does teach providing for exchanging comments, (“a chain of command for approval and comments”, column 4, lines 34 - 35), he does not teach requesting or providing clarification.

The functionality of providing for the transmission of comments is so very similar to the applicant's providing clarification that such a slight difference does not present a new or novel functionality. Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art that the purpose of a discussion and response via comments within a project management setting is to provide clarification about some aspect of the project between the plurality of parties involved. Having a discussion involves such old and well-known features as asking and answering questions, providing additional details on a topic, and communication in such a manner as the person involved in conversing would have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the project framework. Therefore, it would be very obvious to any one of ordinary skill in the art of project management to clarify issues involved in a project by facilitating a discussion using comments.

As per claims 3 and 38, Goodale teaches a method and a system further comprising the steps of:

forwarding the at least one electronic document back to the entity, ("interrupt circulation of the request by returning the request to the originator for second consideration", column 4, lines 57 – 59).

While Goodale does teach the capability to discuss an issue by exchanging comments, ("a chain of command for approval and comments", column 4, lines 34 - 35) and ("memo", column 5, line 22), Goodale does not teach opening a notebook computer or requesting / providing clarification.

The action of opening a notebook computer is so obvious that it does not present a new or novel feature. Official Notice is taken that it would have is old and well-known in the art that opening an electronic notebook that contains a document is an old and very well known in the art of computer science. In order for a computer notebook to operate, it must be opened. Opening a computer notebook is a necessary condition for a user to be able to push the buttons and type on the keys in a manner for the computer to be operable. Without being opened, the notebook computer could not be operated and the document contained therein could not be accessed.

The functionality of exchanging comments is so very similar to the applicant's providing clarification that such a slight difference does not present a new or novel functionality. Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art that the purpose of a discussion and response within a project management setting is to provide clarification about some aspect of the project between the plurality of parties involved. Having a discussion involves such old and well-known features as asking and answering questions, providing additional details on a topic, and communication in such a manner as the person involved in conversing would have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the project framework. Therefore, it would be very obvious to any one of ordinary skill in the art of project management to clarify issues involved in a project by facilitating a discussion.

As per claims 4 and 39, Goodale teaches a method and system further comprising the steps of one of the entities in the approval process disapproving the at least one electronic document and automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of an entity and the document originator, ("the processing/voting options state how each recipient may vote

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approve, disapprove, abstain on the request, and may further state the option of certain recipients to interrupt circulation of the request by returning the request to the originator for second consideration. In the latter case, after the route package is sent back to the originator via electronic mail, the originator has the option of continuing the circulation. Default voting options and recipient re-routing capabilities are also provided by the present invention”, column 4, lines 55 - 64).

As per claims 5 and 40, Goodale teaches a method and system further comprising the step of determining if a monetary value associated with the at least one electronic document, (“a purchase order request from a project engineer may have to be approved through a pertinent chain of command”, column 1, lines 13 - 15), wherein a purchase order is a document that contains a monetary value.

As per claims 6 and 41, Goodale et al teaches the step of temporarily substituting a substitute entry for one of the entities in the approval hierarchy, (“He may edit the routing list by adding names, deleting names, and/or changing the order of names”, column 6, lines 39 - 43), where add, delete and change are means for substituting.

As per claims 7 and 42, Goodale teaches methods and system further comprising the step of maintaining the at least one electronic document in a central storage location to which the entities in the approval process can access, review and approve the at least one of several types of electronic document, (“The route package is saved in a local database of the user in the form of a special data structure for route packages, to be discussed. Also, the user may send the

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route package to be circulated as addressed by pressing function key 1 of Package screen 35”, column 10, line 34 - 39).

As per claims 12 and 47, Goodale et al teaches where a document is a funding document that contains funding, (“a purchase order request from a project engineer may have to be approved through a pertinent chain of command”, column 1, lines 13 - 15), wherein a purchase order is a document that tells how much funding is approved.

As per claims 13 and 48, Goodale et al teaches where a document is a purchase order, (“a purchase order request from a project engineer may have to be approved through a pertinent chain of command”, column 1, lines 13 - 15).

As per claims 15 and 50, Goodale et al teaches where a document is an invoice approval (“payment approval may be hierarchical, based upon the amount of the bill”, column 10, lines 43 - 45), wherein a bill is an invoice.

As per claims 19 and 53, Goodale teaches a method and system further comprising the steps of establishing a user profile for each user participating in the method and limiting a user's access to the at least one electronic document based on a parameter in the user profile, (“FIG. 21 is an illustration of a screen on which a user defines route package defaults in his User Profile of the embodiment of FIG. 1”, column 4, lines 1 - 3).

As per claims 20 and 54, Goodale teaches a method and system further comprising the step of generating an electronic workflow list for a user that contains a list of electronic

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documents that require an action by the user, ("FIG. 13 is an illustration of a Mailbox screen from which the user is notified of his mail items in the embodiment of FIG. 1", column 3, lines 46 - 47), wherein the list of items is a list of documents that require action.

As per claims 21, 55 and 56, Goodale teaches a method and system wherein the step of automatically forwarding the notice further comprises forwarding the notice on an Intranet, ("the present invention is to be applied to a network of computer terminals or workstations in an office where each person or department in the office has access to a terminal", (column 4, lines 11 - 13).

As per claims 25 - 29 and 60 - 64, Goodale teaches methods and systems incorporating electronic files, documents, and images ("the present invention is a subpart of the electronic mail application which enables users to send messages, documents, files, etc to each other", column 4, lines 26 - 28).

4. As per claim 35, Goodale et al teach a method and a system for automating, the method comprising the steps of:

generating at least one electronic document, ("the send operation enables the user to transmit items to other users in the form of a memo, phone message, invitation or package", column 5, lines 21 - 23) and ("means for enabling a sender to establish a circulation list and associate the item to be circulated with the circulation list", column 1, line 68 - column 2, line 2), wherein a memo, a phone message invitation, package and a circulation list are electronic documents and establishing a list is generating a list;

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identifying entities in the approval process, (“the present invention provides electronic means for a user to ask a pertinent chain of command for approval and comments of a certain request”, column 4, lines 33 - 35) and (“the route list therefore specifies an ordered list of originator selected recipients”, column 4, lines 42 - 44), and (“a purchase order request from a project engineer may have to be approved through a pertinent chain of command”, column 1, lines 13 - 15), wherein recipients are entities;

automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval process, (“the present invention enables users to process a document or the like through desired recipients as opposed to merely distribute documents or copies thereof to desired recipients”, column 4, lines 29 - 32) and (“after a recipient has received the route package and taken action, i.e. voted and/or commented on the request, he sends the route package to the next list recipient via e-mail”, column 4, lines 46 - 49), wherein e-mail is an automatic process (“automated features are conventionally called applications and include for example electronic mail”, column 4, lines 18 - 19), wherein automatically is defined in the applicant specification as providing automation to a manual process;

automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval hierarchy, (“interrupt circulation of the request by returning the request to the originator for second consideration”, column 4, lines 57 - 59).

While Goodale does teach providing for exchanging comments, (“a chain of command for approval and comments”, column 4, lines 34 - 35), he does not teach requesting or providing clarification.

The functionality of providing for the transmission of comments is so very similar to the applicant’s providing clarification that such a slight difference does not present a new or novel functionality. Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art that the purpose of a discussion and response via comments within a project management setting is to provide clarification about some aspect of the project between the plurality of parties involved. Having a discussion involves such old and well-known features as asking and answering questions, providing additional details on a topic, and communication in such a manner as the person involved in conversing would have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the project framework. Therefore, it would be very obvious to any one of ordinary skill in the art of project management to clarify issues involved in a project by facilitating a discussion using comments.

Goodale does not teach a system specifically for project management. A general reason why it would be useful to apply the Goodale invention to a project management is that projects have numerous points in the time span of the project where approvals are needed.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the Goodale invention to project management because projects have many phases where approvals are necessary. These approvals are also made by different entities based

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on the phase that the project is in and by how much money is being requested as needed for a specific phase. Each step in a project could be thought of as a separate purchase order, so the Goodale system that approves purchase orders would be very useful to perform these types of approvals faster and more efficiently than a manual process.

As per claim 36, Goodale teaches a system for automating, the system comprising:

an network and a workstation coupled to the network, ("the present invention is to be applied to a network of computer terminals or workstations", column 4, lines 11 - 12).

at least one client workstation coupled to the network, wherein the at least one client workstation is used to identify entities that comprise an approval process, ("pressing function key 7 on screen 31 of FIG 5 cycles through the different re-routing abilities the user may assign a recipient at the current cursor position. A recipient may re-route the route package by editing the route itself", column 6, lines 37 - 41), wherein the route is the approval process;

a database server coupled to the network, the database server containing at least one electronic document, ("the route package is saved in a local database", column 10, lines 34 - 35) and ("data employed or generated by these applications are organized and stored in respective databases", column 4, lines 23 - 24);

a workflow server coupled to the network wherein the workflow server automatically forwards a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval process upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval process, ("a pointer to the previous recipient who had the route

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package and a pointer to the next recipient who is to receive the route package”, column 14, lines 9 - 11).

Goodale does not teach a system specific to project management. A general reason that it would be useful to apply the approval system to a project management function is that projects have steps or phases and at each one there is an approval necessary to continue to the next step.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the Goodale invention to project management because projects have many phases where approvals are necessary. These approvals are also made by different entities based on the phase that the project is in and by how much money is being requested as needed for a specific phase. Each step in a project could be thought of as a separate purchase order, so the Goodale system that approves purchase orders would be very useful to perform these types of approvals faster and more efficiently than a manual process.

5. Claims 8 - 10, 18, 43 - 45, 52, 57, 66 and 67 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al (US 6,161,113) in view of Nelson (US 6,032,132).

As per claims 8 and 43, Goodale et al teaches an approval process in a business hierarchy. Goodale does not teach where a document is a request for assistance that initiates the project.

Nelson teaches the management of a contract from start to finish, ("The processes performed in the contract management module are illustrated in the flow chart of FIG. 30. FIG. 31 shows a screen display 144 that may be used by a system information manager to manage contract term information. This screen provides the facility to locate contract terms by account number BAN or OCN"), wherein a contract initiates a project. Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use the Goodale approval process to initiate a project by approving a contract because approving or signing contracts are a well known means of initiating a project. The Goodale approval process would make the approval of a contract by a plurality of parties faster and more efficient.

As per claims 9 and 44, Goodale et al teaches an approval process in a business hierarchy. Goodale does not teach that the document is a contract.

Nelson teaches a payment system where ("payment approval may be hierarchical, based upon the amount of the bill", column 10, lines 43 - 45) and ("the bill will then appear for approval in the approval queue of the next user in the approval hierarchy", column 10, 49 - 40). Nelson also teaches contracts ("The processes performed in the contract management module are illustrated in the flow chart of FIG. 30. FIG. 31 shows a screen display 144 that may be used by a system information manager to manage contract term information. This screen provides the facility to locate contract terms by account number BAN or OCN"). Both systems are analogous

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art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use the Goodale approval a contract by a plurality of parties because this would make the approval of a contract by a plurality of parties faster and more efficient.

As per claim 10 and 45, Goodale et al teaches an approval process in a business hierarchy. Goodale does not teach where a document is a commitment with respect to a vendor.

Nelson teach where a document is a commitment with respect to vendor, ("Described herein is a system for the management of billed charges and services between communication carrier service providers. The system contemplates an arrangement in which a first communication carrier service provider is billed for services by a second communication carrier service provider, the billed charges most typically received in a first digital file format", column 1, lines 53 - 58), wherein an arrangement is a commitment. Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the Goodale approval process to a commit to a vendor because this would allow the user to place orders for goods and services in a fast and efficient manner. It would also allow for differing degrees of approval authority for different prices of items and thereby insure that the proper controls are in place to allow needed items to be ordered using the proper approvals.

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As per claims 18 and 52, Goodale teaches an approval process in a business hierarchy. Goodale does not teach organizing the plurality of electronic documents into folders, use of drag and drop, and providing a plurality of views of the plurality of electronic documents.

Nelson teach a method and system, wherein there are a plurality of electronic documents, the method further comprising the steps of organizing the plurality of electronic documents into folders, use of drag and drop, and providing a plurality of views of the plurality of electronic documents, ("In one embodiment of the invention the GUI is a personal or other stand-alone computer which may operate in the NT or Windows 95 environment", column 5, lines 30 - 32). Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to work in a Windows environment because this would make the system easier to use and would allow the system to be used by a larger number of people.

As per claims 57, 66 and 67, Goodale teaches the where the system is an Intranet computer network. Goodale does not teach an external network of the Internet.

Nelson does teach the Internet, ("The data network 1 may be the Internet, an intranet, or any type of node based computer system", column 5, lines 13 - 15). Both systems are analogous art because both are network based systems for the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members. Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

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It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to work on the Internet because this would make the system easier to use and would allow the system to be used by a larger number of people throughout the world.

5. Claims 11, 14, 22, 23, 46, 49, 58 and 59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al (US 6,161,113) in view of Mora et al (US 6,161,113).

As per claims 11 and 46, Goodale et al teaches a system that permits a hierarchy of people to approve a document. Goodale does not specifically teach a bid.

Mora teaches a request for money that is justified by a budget, ("to request additional money for the project once the project has begun", column 12, lines 41 - 43) where ("the estimation process, WBS and schedule and budget", column 11, lines 35 - 40), wherein a bid is a request for money supported by a budget. Both systems are analogous art because they both are approval process devices.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to perform the approval of a bid by a plurality of persons because this would allow the bidding process to move forward faster and in a more efficient environment.

As per claims 14 and 49, Goodale et al teaches a system that permits a hierarchy of people to approve a document. Goodale does not specifically teach a change order.

Mora teaches an approval of forms where one document is a change order (“wherein one of said forms is a change request form”, column 60, lines 12 –14). Both systems are analogous art because they both are approval process devices.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to perform the approval of changes or modifications to a specification or requirement by a plurality of persons in a faster and more efficient environment.

As per claims 22, 23, 58 and 59, Goodale teaches a method and system for gaining the approval of a hierarchy of people within an organization. Goodale does not teach an approval process specific to a project budget.

Mora teaches approving the budgeting and funding aspects of a project as:

generating a budget for the project, (“Managerial Process--describes the organization structure and organization boundaries, the communication map, training required, reviews to be conducted, the estimation process, WBS and schedule and budget, how requirements will be managed, how risks will be managed, and the metrics plan for the project”, column 11, lines 35 - 40);

generating a funding document using the budget, wherein the at least one electronic document is the funding document, (“Project Summary--A holder/pointer to the official form that is used to request additional money for the project once the project has begun”, column 12, lines 41 - 43). Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to approve the budget and funding of a project because approval of budgets and funding is an old and well known functionality an approval process. Budgets can be thought of a large invoices or collections of future invoices and allowing them to be approved through a hierarchical process would make the budget process faster and easier to perform.

5. Claims 16 and 51 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al (US 6,161,113) in view of Webber Jr. (US 6,167,378).

As per claims 16 and 51, Goodale teaches composed documents used to manage the approval. Goodale does not specifically teach a digital signature.

Webber Jr. teaches digital signatures by reciting, ("the ratifying step is a digital signature", column 25, lines 64 - 65). Both are analogous art because they both teach different aspects of the approval process.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate digital signatures because digital signatures would increase the speed and efficiency with which the approval process was performed. Without incorporating digital signatures, the invention would require the use of standard written signatures, which would require that the signature either be scanned and fed into the system or would require the incorporation of handwriting software which at the time of the invention had not yet been perfected. Digital signatures would eliminate this step and lead to quicker approval from the many people within the approval hierarchy.

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6. Claims 30 - 34 and 65 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al (US 6,161,113) in view of "Accounting Principles and Applications by Brock & Palmer published in 1981.

As per Claims 30 – 34 and 65 composed documents used in a hierarchical approval process. Goodale does teach performing a closeout operation and partially closing out an operation when only a portion of the project has been completed.

Brock & Palmer teaches the use of a General Ledger for performing a close out at the end of the fiscal year, ("the procedure of journalizing and posting the results of operations is called closing the books" and "in the closing procedure, the accountant also uses a summarizing device for these amounts", page 68). Furthermore, the process of closing only a portion of the operation in relation to a percentage of the project completed is also taught as ("still another and more complex, exception to the realization principle for reporting revenue is the percentage of completion basis for measuring income on long-term construction contracts. For example, a contractor may build a bridge that requires three years to complete. It is not logical to wait until the bridge is entirely finished and report all income in the year of completion. Instead, each year a portion of the estimated profit may be recorded as earned", page 26).

Both inventions are analogous art because they both teach a means for keeping track of invoices.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate financial measures, calculation of payments and General Ledger closing entries because such measures are old and well known in the accounting art as means to convey to both the project manager and to the customer the degree to which the goals of the managed

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project are being met. The willingness of the customer to make payment in a timely and accurate manner demonstrates that a customer is happy with the project. Determination of a project being under or over budget is also an indicator of the successful or failure of a project. Meeting specific percentage of completions in a timely manner also present a success measure of the project at specific points in time. Therefore, incorporating financial and General Ledger numbers is an obvious way to determine how well the project is going, how much the service provider should be paid, and is therefore an essential part of the project management system.

5. Claims 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al (US 6,161,113) in view of Mora et al (US 6,161,113) and in further view of Nelson (US 6,032,132).

As per claim 24, Goodale teaches a method and system for gaining the approval of a hierarchy of people within an organization. Goodale does not teach an approval process specific to a project budget.

Mora teaches approving the budgeting and funding aspects of a project. Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to approve the budget and funding of a project because approval of budgets and funding is an old and well known functionality an approval process. Budgets can be thought of a large invoices or collections of

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future invoices and allowing them to be approved through a hierarchical process would make the budget process faster and easier to perform.

Neither Goodale nor Mora teaches organizing the plurality of electronic documents into folders, use of drag and drop, and providing a plurality of views of the plurality of electronic documents.

Nelson teach a method and system, wherein there are a plurality of electronic documents, the method further comprising the steps of organizing the plurality of electronic documents into folders, use of drag and drop, and providing a plurality of views of the plurality of electronic documents, ("In one embodiment of the invention the GUI is a personal or other stand-alone computer which may operate in the NT or Windows 95 environment", column 5, lines 30 - 32). Both systems are analogous art because they both involve the approval and payment of purchase orders and invoices using hierarchical members.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale and Mora approval processes by permitting the system to work in a Windows environment because this would make the system easier to use and would allow the system to be used by a larger number of people.

Response to Amendments

7. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1 - 67 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

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Conclusion

8. No claims were allowed and all claims were rejected.
9. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Sudia (US 5,659,616) – Digital signatures.
Lemle (US 5,315,504) – Document approval system.
Wood (US 5,381,332) – Project management cost system.

10. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Eric Shaffer whose telephone number is (703) 305-5283. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (703) 305-9643.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 305-3900.

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington D.C. 20231

Or faxed to:

(703) 746-7238	[After Final communications, labeled "Box AF"]
(703) 746-7239	[Official communications]
(703) 706-9124	[Informal/Draft communications, labeled "PROPOSED" or "DRAFT"]

Hand delivered responses should be brought to Crystal Park 5, 7th floor receptionist.

ETS
November 10, 2004


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SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
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